



# The Principles of Masonic Law And The Symbolism of Freemasonry (with linked TOC)

*M.D. Albert G. Mackey*

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Two books, *The Principles of Masonic Law: A Treatise on the Constitutional Laws, Usages And Landmarks of Freemasonry* and *The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining Its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols*.

## The Principles of Masonic Law

In presenting to the fraternity a work on the Principles of Masonic Law, it is due to those for whom it is intended, that something should be said of the design with which it has been written, and of the plan on which it has been composed. It is not pretended to present to the craft an encyclopedia of jurisprudence, in which every question that can possibly arise, in the transactions of a Lodge, is decided with an especial reference to its particular circumstances. Were the accomplishment of such an herculean task possible, except after years of intense and unremitting labor, the unwieldy size of the book produced, and the heterogeneous nature of its contents, so far from inviting, would rather tend to distract attention, and the object of communicating a knowledge of the Principles of Masonic Law, would be lost in the tedious collation of precedents, arranged without scientific system, and enunciated without explanation.

When I first contemplated the composition of a work on this subject, a distinguished friend and Brother, whose opinion I much respect, and with whose advice I am always anxious to comply, unless for the most satisfactory reasons, suggested the expediency of collecting the decisions of all Grand Masters, Grand Lodges, and other masonic authorities upon every subject of Masonic Law, and of presenting them, without commentary, to the fraternity.

## The Symbolism of Freemasonry

Of the various modes of communicating instruction to the uninformed, the masonic student is particularly interested in two; namely, the instruction by legends and that by symbols. It is to these two, almost exclusively, that he is indebted for all that he knows, and for all that he can know, of the philosophic system which is taught in the institution. All its mysteries and its dogmas, which constitute its philosophy, are entrusted for communication to the neophyte, sometimes to one, sometimes to the other of these two methods of instruction, and sometimes to both of them combined. The Freemason has no way of reaching any of the esoteric teachings of the Order except through the medium of a legend or a symbol.

A legend differs from an historical narrative only in this—that it is without documentary evidence of authenticity. It is the offspring solely of tradition. Its details may be true in part or in whole. There may be no internal evidence to the contrary, or there may be internal evidence that they are altogether false. But neither the possibility of truth in the one case, nor the certainty of falsehood in the other, can remove the traditional narrative from the class of legends. It is a legend simply because it rests on no written foundation. It is oral, and therefore legendary.

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